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SCHOOL READINESS ALERT

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X **Priority Schools**
X **Severe Need Schools**

TO: Mayors, Superintendents, School Readiness Councils, Chair/Co-Chair and Liaisons

FROM: Paul F. Flinter, Chief, Department of Education
Bureau of Early Childhood Education and Social Services

Peter Palermino, Manager, Child Care Team
Department of Social Services

SUBJECT: Health Record Keeping Policies and Referrals for Health Services,
Including Appropriate Immunizations and Screenings in School Readiness Programs

The State Departments of Education and Social Services are issuing this TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ALERT to provide guidance to School Readiness Councils and their subgrantees on the School Readiness requirement for referrals for health services, including referrals for appropriate immunizations and screenings.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Each school readiness program must:

1. Have record-keeping policies that require documentation of the name and address of each child's primary care provider, health insurance company and information on whether the child is immunized and has had health screens in accordance with the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule adopted by Connecticut; and
2. Be able to make referrals to health services, including referrals for appropriate immunizations and screenings.

RATIONALE

Children who are healthy can explore, learn and reap the full benefits of their early learning experience. The Connecticut General Assembly recognized this direct relationship between the health status of children and their ability to succeed in learning and it conveyed this intent through the school readiness legislation. The record keeping provision requires that school readiness programs work with the parents or guardians of children in the program to insure that the children receive regular well-child care.

WHAT IS BEST PRACTICE?

1. Once each year, children from two to six years of age should receive a well-child screening exam. Well-child examinations should be comprehensive and include a complete physical examination and health history, a developmental and nutrition assessment, eye and hearing exams, health education and information, and immunizations and lab tests, including blood lead levels, as appropriate, based on the age of the child and outlined in the EPSD periodicity schedule.
2. The childcare provider should play a pivotal role in linking children and their families to the health care delivery system. The expectation for providers to meet this indicator is regular reviews of children's health records and notification to the parent or guardian when the health record indicates that a child is due for a well child examination and/or appropriate screenings. The ability of the provider to assist in making referrals and provide access to preventive and primary health care can ensure the healthy growth and development of children as well as early identification of problems that may benefit from intervention.
3. Young children need regular dental examinations every six months. These examinations should include education and information for parents and children concerning fluoride supplementation, tooth cleaning, injury prevention, and dietary habits as well as appropriate preventive dental procedures. School readiness programs should include in their policies for health how they will assist in making referrals and provide access to dental care to ensure the healthy growth and development of young children.
4. Young children and their families need access to coverage for these vital health services. Coverage is available for regular well-child care and other health care services for children who are enrolled in Connecticut's HUSKY A (Medicaid) program under the federal EPSDT program which is directly referenced in the school readiness legislation. Young children enrolled in HUSKY B or in commercial health insurance plans are covered under their plans for regular well-child care. Both HUSKY plans and most commercial insurance plans follow the recommended schedule for well-child care that has been established by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).
5. Programs should work with families who need assistance in obtaining health insurance coverage for their children. Connecticut's HUSKY A program provides comprehensive coverage for all children, including children with other health insurance, with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level (about \$31,000 for a family of four); and the HUSKY B program provides health insurance coverage for uninsured children with incomes above 185% of the federal poverty level. Depending on the family's income, this coverage is either free or offered at low cost. There are no income limits for HUSKY. Families with income above 300% of the federal poverty level (about \$50,000 for a family of four) can enroll their children by paying the group premium rate. All families below that income level are eligible for subsidized coverage. For children in families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level (about \$31,000 for a family of

four), there is no cost to the family. The family's assets or property are not considered in determining the coverage that a family will receive.

6. Under licensing regulations, every early care program must have a health consultant (school readiness programs who are exempt from licensing must follow the licensing requirements). The health consultant is an important resource in successfully addressing the quality health indicators. This is reinforced through the quality indicator that describes the health consultant role as providing consultation, training and education for program staff and families on well child care at least twice a year. A health consultant is a health professional (registered nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, physician, or physician assistant) with education and/or experience in child health. The health consultant should visit an early care or education program on a regular basis and is accessible to staff and families. The goals of health consultation are to: 1) ensure a healthy and safe environment for children, families, and staff, and 2) promote child and family health and development.

The responsibilities of the health consultant include but are not limited to:

- Linking children with a primary care provider and assisting families with enrolling children in a health insurance plan;
- Promoting children's access to health screenings and immunizations;
- Linking children with oral health care services and coordinating access to services with a oral health (dental) consultant;
- Assisting staff with identifying a primary care provider;
- Guiding the maintenance of health records;
- Identifying children with chronic illnesses and special needs and working with the child's primary care provider and managed care plan, parents, staff and others to develop a plan of care;
- Coordinating and communicating health information and services across settings (family, child care, primary care, and other health/ intervention services and consultants) to promote continuity of care;
- Developing and implementing comprehensive health and safety policies;
- Observing hygiene practices and recommending efforts to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases;
- Inspecting the environment, toys and equipment for safety hazards;
- Reviewing meal plans and snacks and consulting with the nutrition consultant as needed;
- Developing a plan for emergency preparedness including maintaining first aid kits;
- Identifying child abuse and neglect in coordination with the social service consultant and referring to DCF, if necessary;
- Offering health education to children, staff and parents;
- Adapting the environment in consultation with the early childhood education/special education consultant to meet the health and developmental needs of all children including those with special needs;
- Promoting developmentally appropriate care in consultation with the early childhood education/ special education consultant, social service consultant and any other consultants to the program;
- Identifying children with behavioral and developmental concerns and coordinating assessment and intervention, as needed, with staff, family, primary care providers and other consultants;
- Promoting safe medication administration practices.

It is important for both school readiness councils and school readiness providers to understand their role in ensuring good health for the children in their care. It is necessary for them to take the responsibility to build into their programs and policies the strategies and supports that are necessary to comply with state health requirements and ensure best practices in their programs. Attached to this ALERT is a listing of resources for additional information, publications and assistance, model policies and standards, as well as copies of informational pamphlets and brochures.

If you have any questions, please contact Joyce Staples, School Readiness Program Manager, Connecticut State Department of Education at (860) 807-2057 or E-mail to joyce.staples@po.state.ct.us

RESOURCES

General

- *The Healthy Child Care America Campaign* is a collaborative effort of health professionals, child care providers and families working in partnership to improve the health and safety of children in childcare. The Campaign is sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Bureau of Child Care and Maternal and Child Health. Educational materials available include the *Blueprint in Action*, a 46-page booklet that identifies five goals for healthy and safe childcare, a quarterly newsletter (see information listed below) and informational brochures and handouts. The *Healthy Child Care America Campaign* is located at the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Department of Community Pediatrics, 141 Northwest Point Blvd, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007, Phone: 1-(888) 227 5409, email: childcare@aap.org. Website: <http://ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/nccic/hcca/abthcca.html>
- Under construction, *Healthy Child Care Connecticut's website*. This site will have important and timely information for all child care providers in the state. It is also the website for the Head Start State Collaboration Office located at the Department of Social Services, 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106. The phone number for the Head Start State Collaboration Office is (860) 424-5066. The phone number for Healthy Child Care Connecticut is 1-(888) 608-7830. Website: www.healthychildcare.state.ct.us.
- The *Health Promotion Unit, the Division of Health Education and Intervention of the Department of Public Health* has a number of health education resources for childcare providers. The Department of Public Health is located at 410 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06134-0308. Phone: (860) 509 8073. The Department of Public Health's website is www.state.ct.us/dph/
- The State Department of Education, Bureau of Early Childhood Education & Social Services has produced a comprehensive listing of community resources which is available in the publication *Connecticut Early Childhood Community Resources, Programs/Initiatives which Support Families, Early Care and Education Providers and Young Children*. The Bureau of Early Childhood Education & Social Services of the Department is located at 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457. Phone: (860) 807-2056. The State Department of Education's website is www.state.ct.us/sde/
- The American Academy of Pediatrics produces a quarterly newsletter entitled *Healthy Child Care America*. It is targeted to health care providers, childcare providers and families. The subscription is free. To get on the mailing list contact Diona Rouse at 1-(800) 433-9016 or by email at drouse@aap.org
- *The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care* seeks to enhance the quality of out-of-home child care by supporting state and local health departments, child care regulatory agencies, child care providers, and parents in their efforts to identify and promote health and safe child care. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, UCHSC at Fitzsimons, Campus Mail Stop F541, PO Box 6508, Aurora, CO. 80045-0508. Phone: 1-(303) 724-0663. Website: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/>
- The goal of *Bright Futures* is to respond to current and emerging preventive and health promotion needs of infants, children, adolescents, families, and communities. *Bright Futures* guidelines and the Bright Futures web site have been designed to meet these needs. Bright Futures is sponsored by Maternal and Child Health Bureau ([MCHB](http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov)), the Human Resources Administration Agency ([HRSA](http://www.hrsa.gov)), and [Pfizer](http://www.pfizer.com) Pediatric Health. Website: www.brightfutures.org

Standards and Policies

- *Model Child Care Health Policies* are available on line for downloading through the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, 919 Conestoga Road, Building 2-suite 307, Rosemont, PA 19010, Phone: 1-(610) 520-9123. Website: <http://www.paaap.org/ecels/model.htm>.
- *National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*. These performance standards were developed jointly by the American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics and provide goals for practice and guidelines for implementation. Contact the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 2000 15th Street, North, Suite 701, Arlington, VA 22201-2617, Phone: 1-(703) 524-7802, Email: info@ncemch.org, Website: <http://www.ncemch.org>.
NOTE: The *Performance Standards* can be downloaded from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at www.nrc.uchsc.edu/
- *Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children*. This publication highlights the *National Health and Safety Performance Standards*. Copies available from the National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse, Chain Bridge Road, Suite 450, Vienna, VA 22182-2536, Phone: 1-(703) 356-1964, Fax: 1 (703) 821 2098, email: nmchc@circsol.com
- Connecticut's EPSDT periodicity schedule is based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and can be used as a guide for all children in school readiness programs.
NOTE: A laminated copy of the EPSDT periodicity schedule is enclosed.

Community Resources

- For information on local community resources contact *Infoline at 2-1-1*. Infoline is Connecticut's telephone information and referral service, a single source for information about community services and referrals to health services and human service programs. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is staffed by trained professional caseworkers, including bilingual English/Spanish staff. It is also accessible to the hearing impaired by TDD. For more information go to Infoline's website: www.infoline.org.
NOTE: A copy of an Infoline brochure and bookmark are enclosed. For additional copies of either the brochure and/or bookmark call the United Way of Connecticut/Infoline at (860) 571-7500.

Husky -- Health Coverage

- *The Children's Health Project (CHP)* offers no cost training on the HUSKY program and assistance in sponsoring HUSKY enrollment activities. CHP, 999 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105, Phone: (860) 550 6744. For more information go to the Project's website, which is part of the Children's Health Council's site: www.childrenshealthcouncil.org
NOTE: A copy of the yellow laminated "Husky Quick Reference Guide for Child Care Providers" and a "HUSKY Outreach Order Form" is enclosed.
- For regular updates on HUSKY outreach activities and news go to www.ctkidslink.org and follow the link to "Covering Connecticut's Kids".
- For more information on HUSKY and to receive brochures and application packets contact the HUSKY Health Infoline at 1-(877) CT-HUSKY, press 1.

- To apply for HUSKY coverage by telephone or with parents' permission to check on the status of an application contact the HUSKY Eligibility and Enrollment Center (Benova) at 1-(877) CT-HUSKY, press 2 or call 1-(800) 656-6684.
- For help in getting services for children already enrolled in HUSKY contact the managed care plan in which the child is enrolled. If additional assistance is needed contact the Children's Health Infoline (CHIL) at 1-(800) 434-7869. CHIL is staffed by multilingual care coordinators and is also accessible to the hearing impaired by TDD.
NOTE: A CHIL brochure is enclosed. To order additional copies please contact Children's Health Project at (860) 550-6744 Extension 271.

Medication Administration

- For information on *medication administration courses* contact Healthy Child Care Connecticut at 1-(888) 608-7830.

Emergency Care

- See enclosed copy of *Get Medical Help Immediately* for a listing of conditions that require immediate medical evaluation.
- Emergency and first aid procedures are provided in *Healthy Young Children*. To obtain a copy of this publication contact National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 2009.